voted to that subject. Here we should sketch the
221 rhythm of village life and something of its annual cycle of activity.

529 The New Year holiday, for the people of China the first fifteen days of the year, is the main period of leisure for the villagers. Food is prepared in advance, and even the women may rest from their cooking during the first days of the holiday. The town is decorated with nien-hua (New Year's pictures) and ch'un-lien (paired New Year's Day mottoes). Visiting friends, and relatives, gambling, eating the best food of the year, wearing the best clothes, and indulging the children, make this the most festive period in the year. For many families it is the only time in the year when they can afford to eat meat dishes. The special dishes of the season vary from province to province. In the northern provinces chiao-tzu (meat dumplings) and other wheat-based elaborate dishes are particular favorites; as one moves south, rice-based delicacies such as nien-kao (year cakes) figure more prominently in the New Year's feasts. Besides being a time of celebration, the New Year is also the time for settling accounts; for many farmers there will be little left for celebration when the creditors have been dealt with.

221 The regular work of the agricultural year be-
241 gins immediately after the New Year. In Hopei and Shansi, the farming cycle is governed by the need to conserve water and by the demands of the principal crops -- wheat, millet, and kaoliang.

22/ 24/ In early spring, the Hopei and lowland Shansi farmer begins his year-long effort to conserve moisture that has accumulated in the soil during autumn and winter rains. About half the fields are then in winter fallow awaiting spring plowing; the rest are planted in winter wheat. Fertilizer from the household pit is spread on the fallow fields. The wheat is brought to maturity by careful hoeing and by hand irrigation using well water -- a back-breaking operation in which the farmer is helped by his whole family.

In April or May comes the time to plant his remaining fields in millet, kaoliang, or cotton; in the lowland areas he irrigates to assure the germination of seeds. It is then time to harvest the wheat, and once again the farmer calls on his whole family and often on his neighbors for harvesting, threshing, and winnowing, all done by hand with the greatest care to preserve every grain, stalk, and straw. Then the winter wheat land is planted in soyabeans and corn. The farmer and his family may then slacken their pace, but not for long, as autumn brings the harvest of the summer crops, the fall plowing, and finally the planting of winter wheat.

Autumn, too, is the traditional time for the tax collector to appear with his demands for taxes in money or in kind. And, before the Communist abolition of tenancy, it was the time when the landlord claimed his share of the crop.[3] If

3. For landlord-tenant relations in Anhwei, cf. Morton Fried, The Fabric of Chinese Society, New York, 1953, pp. 186-200. Typical rent in 1947-48 was 40 per cent of yield.

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If
● 221 the weather had been favorable and the tax gatherer not unduly rapacious, the farmer might retain enough grain to see his family through to the next harvest. If things had gone badly, a grim winter season lay ahead. Winter was in any case the time for repairing farm implements, weaving thatch, repairing buildings, spinning and weaving rough cloth, and doing other household chores. With the approach of the New Year the farmer might look forward to some festivity, perhaps to slaughtering the family pig; if debt loomed large, the pig might have to be sold to help pay the bills.[4]

769 The farm year,[5] toilsome in north and
796 south alike, is punctuated by other activities and festivals which relieve some of the monotony of the long seasons of work. The first of the annual festivals after the New Year is that of Ch'ing-ming which corresponds in time to the Western Easter. Like Easter, the Ch'ing-ming observance was one a spring fertility festival. At this time, the ties of the living and dead members of the family and clan are celebrated; the family or clan graveyard is swept and food offerings are made to the dead. The performance of those duties is often made the occasion for a family picnic at the graveyard. All relatives make special efforts to join in this annual celebration of family solidarity, and the outing is a pleasant relief from winter and indoor work.[6]

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4. J. L. Buck's study of 16,786 farms showed 39 per cent were in debt from 1929-32. Cited in Lang, Chinese Family and Society, New Haven, 1946, p. 69.

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